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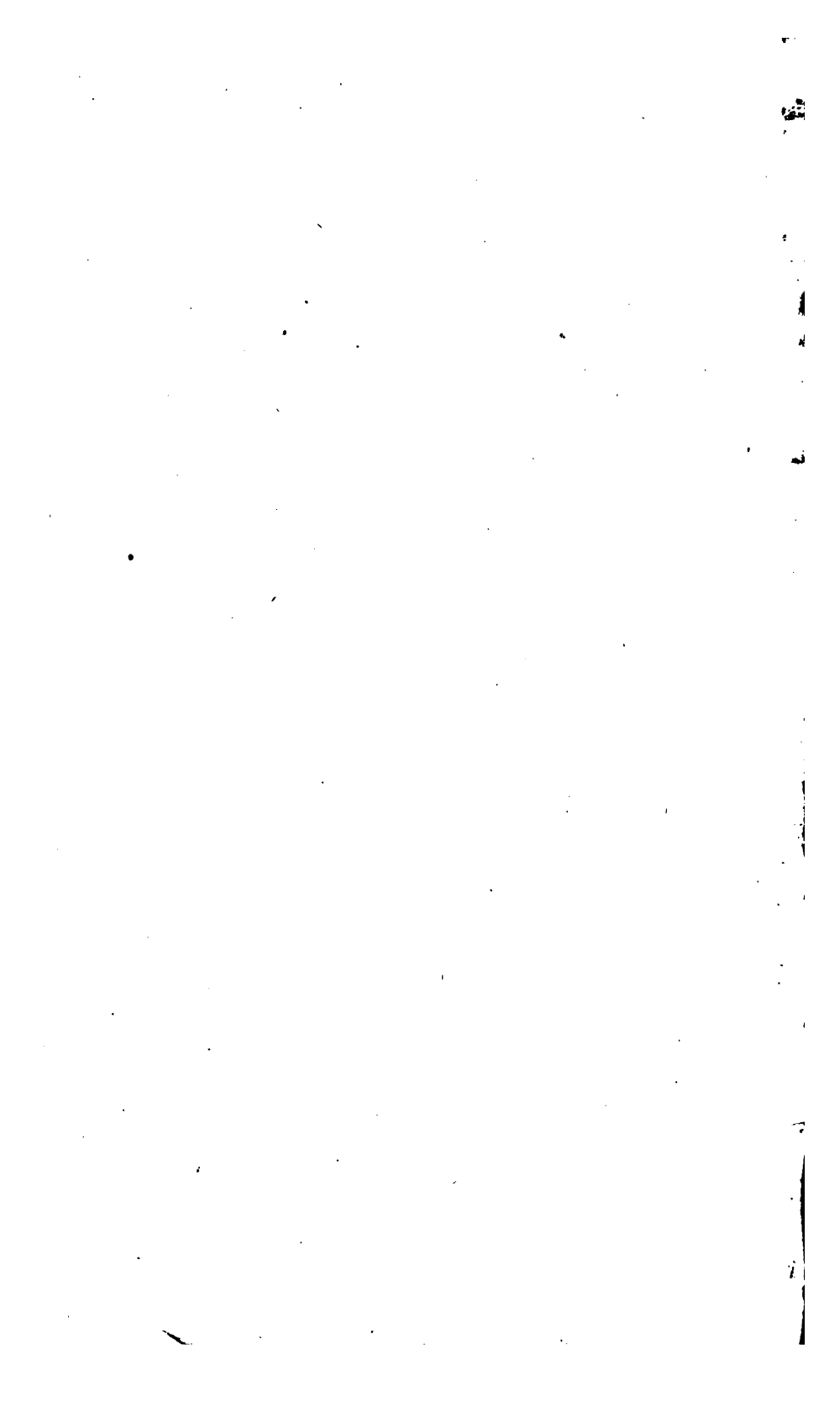
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A
SERMON,
on the
ADVANTAGES
WHICH,
MAN DERIVES FROM WOMAN;
WITH
HINTS to the SINGLE and MARRIED of both SEXES,
IN RELATION TO
CONJUGAL DUTIES,

By JOHN STEPHENS.

"He that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord —
Who can find a virtuous woman? her price is far above rubies.—A virtuous woman
is a crown unto her husband."

SOLOMON.

—●●●●●—
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1866.

Myron Clifford

Harvard

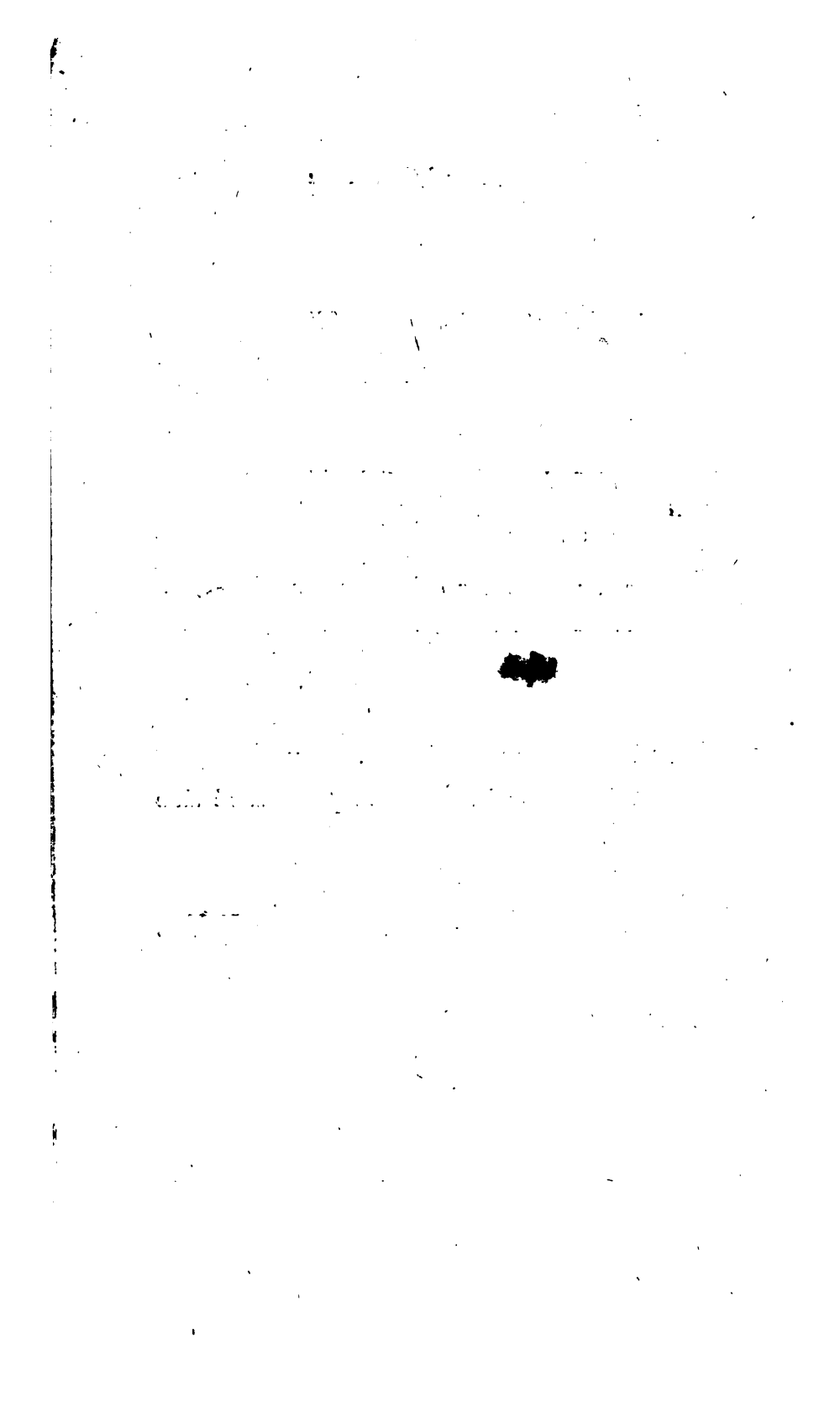


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SOME of the Thoughts in the following Sermon are borrowed from the late DR HUNTER, of the Scotch Church, London-Wall. But as the Discourses from which they are taken, are connected with a Work consisting of seven Large Octavo Volumes, (a Work which most of my Readers never did, nor never will see), it is hoped this acknowledged Liberty will be pardoned.... I have also borrowed a few Sentences from DR ZIMMERMAN; but as I have made some Alterations in those Quotations, I could not with Propriety, mark them with inverted Commas.

J. STEPHENS.





THE

Advantages

Which MAN derives from WOMAN, &c.

GEN. ii. 18.

AND THE LORD GOD SAID, IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN
SHOULD BE ALONE; I WILL MAKE HIM AN
HELP MEET FOR HIM.

THE stupendous fabric of the universe was reared out of nothing by the word of the Lord, and the mighty work of creation was finished. But in the great plan there was one deficiency. For Adam there was not found an help meet for him. The earth, with its grandeur and its productions, the heavens with their glories and their influences, ministered to the service and to the pleasure of man; but all this availed him little, while there was no creature of his own species to whom he could communicate his thoughts, and with whom he could share his happiness. This defect is quickly perceived and instantly supplied by the gracious Creator of

the world, and of Adam.—“And the Lord God said, it is not good the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her to the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”—Hence we may properly infer, that the single man is only partially blessed; and that he who findeth a good wife findeth a good thing: and obtaineth favour of the Lord. I say a *good* wife—such a wife as Eve was, when God brought her to Adam; and such a wife as one of her amiable daughters is, when she is renovated by the grace, and adorned by the virtues, of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.—To represent to you, some of the advantages which a man derives from such a woman, and to suggest a few practical hints, for the regulation of the conduct of the single and the married, of both sexes, in relation to marriage, shall be the objects of the present discourse.

I. Let us consider some of the advantages which a man derives from a good wife....She will help to educate his children—to improve his fortune—to augment his joys—to alleviate his sorrows—and to secure his salvation.

1st. She will help to educate his children. Education, on the part of the mother, commences from the moment she has the prospect of being a mother, and the care of her own health, is, thenceforth, the first duty which she owes to her child. From that moment too she becomes in a peculiar sense, an help meet, for man, as being the depository and guardian of their most precious joint concern. How greatly is her value now enhanced! Her existence is multiplied, her duration is extended.—A manchild is at length born into the world; and what helper so *meet* for the glad father in rearing the tender babe, as the mother who bare him. There are offices which she, and only she, can perform; there are affections which she, and only she, can feel; there are difficulties which she, and only she, can surmount.—The dawning of reason appears; the solicitude of a father awakes; what a task is imposed upon him! But he is not left to perform it alone. The Lord God has provided him an help meet for him,—one prompted by duty, drawn by affection, trained by experience, to assist him in the

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“ Delightful task ! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,
To pour the fresh instruction o’er the mind,
To breathe the enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.”—

In the more advanced stages of education, after the pupil is removed from under the maternal wing, of what assistance to the father, of what importance to the child, are the delicate ideas, the tender counsels, of a wise and virtuous woman !—It is to be hoped that a child trained up in the way in which he should go, by a mother, will never depart from it ; but should the impulse of youthful passion turn him aside from the holy commandment, what means are so likely, to reclaim him, as the recollection of a mother’s lessons, and the consideration of a mother’s feelings !

In the education of her own sex, the mother seems to be more than an help meet for man. The trust chiefly, if not entirely devolves on her : and where could it be deposited so well ? The knowledge she has of herself, her experience of the world, and maternal affection, are all she needs to qualify her for this arduous undertaking. A mother only can enter into the feelings and weaknesses, and necessities of a young female, entering on an unknown, varying, tempestuous, dangerous ocean ; for she remembers how she herself felt and feared, what

she needed, and how she was relieved, and assisted, and carried through. And to a mother only can a young female impart the numberless, nameless anxieties which every step she takes in life must necessarily excite. When she converses with her mother, she is only thinking aloud. The good conduct of a mother, is one of the loveliest patterns of virtue, and the hope of a mother's applause is, next to God's, the most powerful motive to imitate it. The superiority of female to male youth in respect of moral, whatever be the case as to intellectual improvement, is clearly deducible from the larger share which the mother has in the education of the daughters, than of the sons. Behold then, my friends, how much help man derives from woman, in the education of their common offspring! And what a pity is it, that, without necessity, it should ever be consigned to less skilful, less affectionate, and less successful hands.

2d. She helps to improve his fortune. No man ever prospered in the world, without the consent and co-operation of his wife. Let *him* be ever so frugal, regular, industrious, intelligent, successful; all goes for nothing, if *she* is profuse, disorderly, indolent, or unfaithful to her trust. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands, the house droppeth through." But, O how good a thing

it is, and how pleasant, when the gracious intentions of God and nature are fulfilled! With what spirit and perseverance does a man labour in his vocation, when he knows that his earnings will be faithfully disposed, and carefully improved! With what confidence will he resort to his farm, to his merchandise, fly over the land, over the seas, meet difficulty, meet danger, if he has the assurance that he is not spending his time and strength in vain; that all is well and safe at home; that indulgent heaven has crowned all his other blessings with that of an help meet for him; a discreet manager of his estate; a fellow labourer with him, from a sense of duty, from interest, and from affection! This is the portrait of a good wife, drawn by the pencil of inspiration, PROV. XXXI. 10—31. to save your time, I shall not read it at present, but I beg each of my female hearers to read it on their return to their houses, and may Heaven propagate the resemblance!

3d. She will help to augment his joys. The hermit, the solitary, the single man, is only half blessed.

“Nature, in zeal for human amity,
Denies or damps all *undivided* joy;
Joy flies monopolists; it calls for *two*.
Rich fruit! heav’n planted; never plucked by *one*.
Needful auxiliaries are our WIVES, to give
To SOCIAL MAN true relish of himself;”

or any thing in the universe. Alone, man feels a double weight in the afflictions while he only half enjoys the blessings of life. To enjoy the comforts of life with a full relish, man must have a companion, a friend, a wife. Her company, her conversation, her affection, will add to the flavour of the most delicious viands—improve the beauty of the most delightful prospects—give vivacity to the social circle—tranquility to solitude—music to groves—fragrance to flowers—brightness to the firmament—and splendour to the sun. Social happiness, true and essential social happiness, resides only in the bosom of love, and in the arms of friendship. Affectionate intercourse produces an inexhaustible fund of delight. It is the perennial sunshine of the mind. With what anxiety then should we all endeavour to find an amiable being, with whom we may form a tender tie and close attachment, who may inspire us with unfading bliss, and receive increase of happiness from our endearments and attention! How greatly do such connexions increase the kind and benevolent affections of the heart! and how greatly do such dispositions, while they lead the mind to the enjoyment of domestic happiness, awaken all the virtues, and call forth all the best and strongest energies of the soul! Deprived of the chaste and endearing sympathies of LOVE, the species sink into gross sensuality or mute indifference—neglect the improvement of their faculties—and renounce all anxiety to

please—but, incited by love, the sexes mutually exert their powers—cultivate their talents—call every intellectual energy into action—and, by endeavouring to promote each other's happiness, mutually secure their own.

4th. She will help to alleviate his afflictions. It is pleasant to have a companion in solitude—an assistant in labour—a fellow-partaker in joy; but human life contains varieties painful, as well as pleasant. Sorrow, and pain, and solicitude, and disappointment, enter into the history of man; and he is but half-provided for the voyage of life, who has found an associate for his happier days only—while for his days of darkness and distress no sympathizing partner—no help meet is prepared. But the provident care of the Almighty meets every lawful wish—every real want of man; and in bestowing upon him a companion for youth—a sharer in felicity—a partner in property—he was securing for him, at a distance, a friend in age—a solace in affliction—a partner in want—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.—Is he persecuted? Does he incur censure where he hoped for applause—provoke opposition where he expected co-operation? Is his good evil spoken of? Does envy shoot at him her fiery darts—calumny spread over him her monster-figured mantle—and malice scar him with her insidious bolt? Where shall he find an asylum? To whom shall he flee for repose?—Let him

retire to the sanctuary of his dwelling—let him flee to the bosom of his wife. Though the world should be shut against him, she will receive him with open arms; though the world frown upon him, she will receive him with a smile. With affectionate assiduity she will remove every object from his eye—every sound from his ear—every impression from his memory—which is calculated to increase the painful sensibilities of his heart. She will strive by her conversation to divert—by her smiles to cheer—by her caresses to soothe him. She will remind him of the Father of mercies, and the God of consolation—by the influence of her example he will be drawn to a throne of grace—if he cannot pray for anguish of spirit, she will pray for him—and having found mercy for what is past, and obtained grace to help him in the time of need, he will be able to rejoice in persecution for righteousness-sake, knowing that his reward in heaven will be great.—Is he afflicted in body?—wasting with pining sickness, or groaning under excruciating pain? His affectionate partner, will at once attend him in the double capacity of nurse and physician. With what patience she will sit by him from the evening till the morning!—With what sympathy will she endeavour to alleviate the acuteness of his pain!—With what tenderness will she strive to soothe him to beneficial repose!—How easy the bed which she softens!

—How reviving the cordial which she mingles! How potent the medicine which she administers! And how sweet the return of health after sickness, when the help meet for him has been the instrument of its restoration!

5th. She will help to secure his salvation. Is he walking in the way of righteousness? Alas! in the world, he will meet with many temptations as a man, to depart from it; from which she, as a woman, in the privacy of her dwelling, is exempted. She can spend many hours in converse with Heaven, and with God, while he is obliged to attend to the earthly cares of his farm and of his merchandize. But her exemptions and her advantages will serve to qualify her the better to become a help meet for her husband in the important interests of his soul and of eternity. Her deep, and undisturbed communion with God will be improved in his behalf—the fruit of her retirement and leisure, reading and reflection, will be modestly applied to the important purposes of directing him in perplexity, and succouring him in temptation.—Is he unhappily led astray? The steady influence of her mild, gentle, and unostentatious piety, like a friendly Angel, will beckon him to return to the ways of peace and pleasure, and will probably prevail, when all other means have lost their effect. “Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be

won by the conversation of the wives—while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.”——

Does he embrace, and hold fast, the blessed hope of eternal life? That hope will be greatly enhanced by the prospect of enjoying it for ever in her society. His piety will become more ardent, by becoming social—they will take sweet council together—they will with pleasure go to the house of God in company—they will dwell together as heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers may not be hindered—and whatsoever they agree to ask, concerning the salvation of their souls, it shall be granted them by their common Father who is in Heaven.

In all these respects, my brethren, and many more which might be enumerated, a good wife is a help meet for her husband.——Let us now, as we proposed,

II. Suggest a few practical hints, to the single and the married, of both sexes, in relation to the subject.

1st. This subject simply, yet clearly, unfolds woman's nature, station, duty, use and end. This raises her to her proper rank and importance, and instructs her how most effectually to support them; this forbids her to aspire after rule, for her Maker designed her as an helper; this secures for her affection and respect, for

how is it possible to hate or despise what God and nature have rendered essential to our happiness. If the intention of the Creator, therefore, is attended to, the respective claims and duties of the sexes are settled in a moment ; and an end is put to all unprofitable discussion of superiority and inferiority, of authority and subjection, in those whose destination, and whose duty, it is, to be mutually helpful, attentive and affectionate. An ingenious commentator has observed, that the woman was made of a rib, taken out of the side of the man—not out of his head, to rule him—not out of his feet, to be trampled upon by him—but out of his side, to be his equal—under his arm to be protected—near his heart to be beloved.

2nd. Young women, this subject speaks to you. You see what is your earthly destination. It is to be a help meet for man. Keep this object steadily in your eye. Let it direct you, from your earliest days of reason, in the employment of your time—in the cultivation of your talents—in the improvement of your hearts—and in the formation of your manners. Let it influence you with regard to the books you read—the principles you imbibe—the models you imitate—that, by the grace of god, you may qualify yourselves to become help meets for your future husbands—able to train up their children in the way in which they should

go—to share their prosperity with moderation—to alleviate their afflictions by sympathetic tenderness—to improve their temporal interests by your wisdom and your care—and to promote their eternal salvation by your example and your prayers.

Ever keep in mind, my fair hearers, that the proper and peculiar sphere of good women, and good wives, is the retired vale of domestic life.—Study to excell, rather in the useful, than in the ornamental qualities of the female character.—Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth! and, as the only basis of real, uniform, persevering, personal, and relative virtue, endeavour to have your hearts established with grace.

3d. Young men, this subject speaks to you. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Say not that it is good for a man to be alone! the Lord God says it is not; and who art thou that repliest against God? The practice of celibacy is one of the crying vices of our age and country—and is equally inimical to religion—to good morals—to public spirit—and to human comfort. He who says, or lives as if he thought, that it is good for man to be alone, gives the lie to his Maker—sins against the constitution of his nature—dishonours his parents—defrauds another of one of the

justest rights of humanity—and in a case too in which it is impossible for her so much as to complain—and exposes himself to commit offences against society which must not be mentioned in this place. But in making choice of a partner for life, what need is there of prudence!—of the advice of your best friends!—particularly of your parents!—and of the direction of heaven! In taking to yourselves wives, you are forming a connection which death only can dissolve—you are entailing on yourselves the greatest earthly curse—or receiving one of the richest temporal blessings! Guard then against the charms of external beauty—the brilliancy of wit—and the enchantment of wealth! Consider her education—the dispositions of her heart—the qualities of her mind—her domestic accomplishments—and, above all her piety! Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised; her price is far above rubies; the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, and he shall have no need of spoil; she shall do him good and not evil all the days of his life.

4th. Wives, the subject speaks to you. It tells you that you are not to hinder your husbands, but to help them. An indolent, wasteful, contentious, imperious, unfaithful wife; is one of the greatest evils under the sun. I pity, from my heart, the unhappy man who has

a bad wife. She is shackles on his feet—a palsy to his hands—a burthen on his shoulders—smoke to his eyes—vinegar to his teeth—a thorn to his side—a dagger to his heart! Consider my fair hearers, how much your husbands have honoured you, by choosing you, in preference to all other women, to be their bosom, confidential friends—to take charge of their houses, their children, their property, and their happiness, till death shall dissolve the tender, the solemn, the important connection! Consider how much they do, and suffer for your maintenance and comfort. While you are easy, and warm, and safe, at home, they are exposed to ten thousand dangers, and labours, and hardships, by sea and by land—in the summer’s sultry heat—in the winter’s piercing cold—confined to the receipt of custom—immured within the walls of the study—buried in the bowels of the earth—tossed on the tempestuous ocean—or bleeding on the field of war! And what is the chief reward they expect for all their toil, and trouble and danger? The obedience, fidelity, and affection of their wives.—Consider how strongly these duties are recommended in the holy scriptures.—Consider how solemnly you promised to discharge them in the temple—before the minister—before the altar of your God—on your wedding day! And, after all, will you be froward, peevish, fullen, and ill-humoured?

" 'Twill blot your beauty as frosts bite the meads ;
 Confound your frame as whirlwinds shake fair buds ;
 And in no sense is meet or amiable.
 A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled,
 Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty ;
 And, while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
 Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it."—

It is better to dwell alone, on a corner of the house-top,
 than with a brawling woman in a wide house. Wives,
 submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in
 the Lord. Let the wife see that she reverence her hus-
 band. For the Lord God said, I will make him an
 help meet for him. -

5th. Husbands, this subject speaks to you. It says,
 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against
 them. Bitterness toward a wife, is *inhuman*. Yea, it is
 inhumanity of the most monstrous kind. Every wound
 inflicted on your wife, is a wound inflicted on your own
 body. Cruelty to a wife, is cruelty to yourself ; for
 you two are one flesh. Bitterness toward a wife is *un-
 grateful*, it implies ingratitude to your wife. When you
 first addressed her on the subject of marriage, she was
 coy. You protested the sincerity of your passion, and
 she believed you ; but still she was timid and reluctant.
 You employed others to advocate your cause ; at length
 she consented ; and confiding in your integrity, she com-

mitted her body and soul, her property and accomplishments into your hands. Alas! your bitterness proves you dead to every feeling of gratitude, and utterly unworthy of such a treasure.—It implies ingratitude to your *God*. In compliance with your wishes, in answer to your prayers, Heaven has given you a lovely, an amiable woman, to be an help meet for you; and you, insensible of the favour, trample it under your feet, and thus insult the goodness of the Divine Benefactor. Bitterness to a wife is *impious*. It is a violation of one of the plainest laws of nature, and of some of the clearest precepts of the gospel. Hear the apostle of the Gentiles—“Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church—so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies—he that loveth his wife loveth himself, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church—for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh—this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church—nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself.”

But, my brethren, let us not forget that all our earthly connections will quickly be dissolved. Let us therefore

improve them with a view to eternity. Let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.—

“ But this I say, brethren, the time is short : it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it ; for the fashion of this world passeth away.” And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. For so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ;—where you shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage ; but be as the Angels of God.

